

BELMONT VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

MEETING June 30, 2011

Present: Tim Bowman (Chair). Jane Feinberg, Sara Masucci, Jennifer Page, Wendy Rundle, Michael Sattler, Paul Solomon

Guest: Kevin Cunningham (School Committee Liaison)

Meeting convened by the Chair at 7:10 pm.

I. APPROVE MINUTES OF JUNE 16

Minutes approved unanimously without amendment.

II. MEET BELMONT

A request for volunteers for the August 30 event appeared in today's edition of the Belmont Citizen Herald.

III. RECRUITMENT OF NEW VIC MEMBERS

Several possible candidates were mentioned. It was agreed that the VIC member who initiates conversations with a candidate will meet with the candidate and another VIC member, will give the candidate a copy of the vision, and extend an invitation to attend a VIC meeting.

IV. VIC PLANNING:

- CITIZEN ACADEMY: discussion postponed.
- BUDGET PROCESS BENCHMARKING WITH OTHER TOWNS (Jane Feinberg, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon): An autumn meeting was proposed, as a continuing iteration of Envision Belmont (see the document distributed by the chair with the agenda for this meeting).

The following issues in the proposal were discussed:

* A presentation by Robert Mahoney, Chair of the Economic Development Committee and president of the Belmont Savings Bank.

Jennifer noted that Mr. Mahoney, in a presentation to the Planning Board, stated that in the future the town would need \$4M each year beyond any current anticipated increase in revenue to balance its budget. He noted that a part of this gap could be addressed by development in Cushing and Waverley Squares, the Uplands, and South Pleasant St. There was consensus that Mr. Mahoney's presentation, currently proposed to stand alone in the 3:15-3:45 time slot in the agenda was too narrow, and should be part of a larger panel discussion which would describe the budget gap and the ways to bridge it, including overrides, efficiencies, regionalization, and development.

These options could be presented to those attending the meeting as a “diversified portfolio”, which attendees could choose from. The VIC would be acting as a catalyst, informing residents and putting them in the role of decision makers.

* It was noted that the item in the 2:30-3:15 time slot (“interactive budget simulation-----”) needed more context, and that the first half of the proposed meeting would be devoted to what other towns do, and the rest to what Belmont does in the budget process.

Kevin Cunningham noted that while he believes that Belmont’s current budget process is “broken”, he questions whether the problem is the process or the results of the process. He distributed a proposal that he and fellow School Committee member Laurie Slap had submitted to the School Committee for a “Subcommittee to Prepare for Long-term Financial Planning for the Belmont Public Schools”. He stated that School Committee members would meet with members of the Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee to address issues related to the two committees’ interactions during the budget process. The key efforts of the proposed subcommittee would be:

1. Make recommendations to improve the current yearly budget process;
2. Analyze and document the Belmont Public Schools as a complex financial system;
3. Make a recommendation as to whether/how the School Committee should form a finance Subcommittee.

The first and third recommendations would be addressed before the second. The latter would involve creating a framework for looking at the financial aspects of the whole school system. He described the process as “not building scenarios, but creating a process to which scenarios could be applied”.

It was agreed that the VIC’s and School Committee’s activities are complementary and that members of the VIC could meet with Kevin and Laurie Slapp to continue the discussion.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be July 14. “The Citizen’s Academy” will be on the agenda for July 28.

Jennifer will assess members’ preference for a meeting night in the fall.

VI. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul Solomon
Secretary Pro Tem

